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FM AMEMBASSY TALLINN

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INFO RUEHB/S/USEU BRUSSELS

RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TALLINN 000272

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/NB, EUR/ERA

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TAGS: PREL EUN EN LG LH

SUBJECT: BALTIKS: GETTING THE MOST OUR OF FOREIGN POLICY COOPERATION WITH THE EU

Classified by: CDA KAREN DECKER for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

REF: BRUSSELS 943

¶1. (U) This is a joint message from Embassies Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius.

¶2. (C) Embassies Riga, Vilnius and Tallinn want to express our appreciation and support for the proposals in reftel geared toward engaging our missions in EU capitals more actively and improving our foreign policy coordination with the EU.

¶3. (C) In particular we would like to highlight our strong support for several of the practical proposals made by USEU:

-- WEEKLY PRESIDENCY DISCUSSIONS: We concur with the idea of looping missions into the Presidency discussions. A weekly or biweekly briefing by the EUR PDAS, USEU, and a rep from the Embassy in the presidency capital (for DCMs or Pol Chiefs in member capitals) would be an effective way to ensure we have the most up to date information on key issues. This would, in turn, better enable us to engage directly and substantively with host country MFAs.

-- RETHINKING THE GAERC: We strongly support the idea of moving away from the pre-GAERC demarche process. We believe, in its current format, the GAERC demarche has limited utility. While we commend efforts by EUR/ERA to get information to posts earlier (e.g. via Intellipedia), inevitably the information comes too late, as decisions about the GAERC agenda are made a week to ten days before the GAERC; as a result, MFA responses are often pro-forma. Also, to truly engage on the substance, we need to work with the functional or regional experts in the MFA, who are often not in the EU section. That requires more time than the current process allows. Demarches focused on post-GAERC readouts as well as planning for the next cycle will be more useful to us and our counterparts in MFAs. Presidency calls (above) would still enable us to follow up on issues that arise mid-stream.

-- INFORMATION HUBS: We particularly endorse the idea for developing information hubs for priority issues. The Balts are interested in and want to engage more on an array of issues on the US-EU agenda. However, their staffs are small and generally do not have the issue expertise they need. We are frequently told that these smaller EU nations have no "on the ground" reporting in much of Africa, Latin America, or East Asia, so they are not in a position to counter the policy positions of the larger states that do. This makes them reluctant to speak up in EU fora and more likely to "go with the EU consensus." Issue hubs would make it possible for us to access information (beyond talking points) on the issues that resonate in each of our countries. In that vein, as more and more information is pushed out by e-mail and other non-front channel sources, we need to ensure that posts can access these sources of information. Sometimes our countries have no interest in an issue, but other times we may see opportunities for engagement that may not be obvious to others and easier it is for to access the latest USG thinking, the more effective we can be.

DECKER